Bare smear tactics OKd by Hoover

WASHINGTON (AP) — The late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover approved a plan to discredit a Midwest black militant leader with anonymous letters accusing him of adultery and of being a bureau informant, according to FBI documents.

The documents, made available by the Senate intelligence committee, show that the bureau's campaign against the Rev. Charles E. Koen lasted from 1968 to 1971 and was approved at each step of the way by Hoover. However, it was unclear whether the letters were ever actually sent to Mr. Koen, who a committee spokeswoman said is a minister in Cairo, Ill.

According to the FBI documents, the campaign against Mr. Koen began in November, 1968, with a proposal by St. Louis FBI officials to send him an anonymous letter criticizing him for referring to the possible use of violence in his public speeches.

THE LETTER would purport to be from members of Students for a Democratic Society in St. Louis and "would have an adverse effect on the consolidatory efforts of the SDS and the Black Liberators," according to the proposal approved by Hoover.

Two months later, Hoover authorized the FBI's Baltimore office to send an anonymous letter to the No. 2 man in the Black Liberator movement informing him that Mr. Koen was working for either the CIA or FBI. The letter, signed "A Soul Brother," said Mr. Koen "was in Baltimore last week and spent most of his time in the Justice Building. Don't know whether that cat was talking to CIA or FBI."

The FBI documents also include a 1969 memo from the head of the FBI's St. Louis office who claims the campaign forced Mr. Koen's resignation as head of the Black Liberators, a black militant group.

Rev. Charles Koen

IN FEBRUARY, 1969, after Mr. Koen had resigned as head of the Black Liberators, the FBI chief in St. Louis proposed mailing an anonymous letter designed "to alienate (Koen) from his wife and cause suspicion among the Black Liberators that they have a dangerous troublemaker in their midst," an FBI document said.

The anonymous letter would be sent to Mrs. Koen telling her that her husband has "been making it here with Sister Marva Bass and Sister Tony and then he gives us this jive 'bout their (sic) better in bed then (sic) you."

It was to be followed by sending a copy of the anonymous letter to Mr. Koen with the note "I understand she recently received this letter . . . I suggest you look into this matter."

IN A MEMO authorizing the operation, Hoover directed the agents to "use commercially purchased stationery and take the other precautions set out to insure this cannot be traced to this bureau."

The next and final step in the FBI campaign against Mr. Koen came in February, 1971, when Hoover approved a proposal for circulating a cartoon sketch of Mr. Koen that "would emphasize the cost of Mr. Koen's attire and inquire as to the source of his funds."

At that time, Mr. Koen was head of the United Front in Cairo, which, according to the FBI memo, was a "predominately black organization which has been boycotting white merchants in Cairo for the past 20 months."

The plan to send the cartoon was proposed because "it is felt that any diminution of Mr. Koen's support in Cairo would be beneficial since he appears to be the single most important cause of confrontations occurring in Cairo."